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Office of University
Communications

March 23, 2016

GWU President from 2002-2005 Remembered for his Leadership and his Heart

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Dr. Frank R. Campbell is remembered by the Gardner-Webb University community as an eloquent communicator, a cohesive leader and a dear friend. Campbell, who served GWU as president from 2002 to 2005, passed away March 22 at 80 years old.

“With his extraordinary grace and wisdom, Frank Campbell brought healing and stability to this University at one of the very most difficult times in the institution’s history,” offered Dr. Frank Bonner, Campbell’s successor and current GWU president. “Those of us who were here at that time, and I especially, are deeply indebted to Dr. Campbell and truly will never forget him.”

As a student, Campbell concentrated much of his study in the field of Christian ethics. He held a Bachelor of Arts degree from Carson-Newman College in Tennessee, as well as Bachelor of Divinity, Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. He also received a Doctor of Divinity degree from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Kyungnam University in Masan, Korea.

Campbell spent much of his life following God’s call through both educational and pastoral leadership in North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. In North Carolina, he served as pastor of churches in Oxford, Raleigh and Statesville. He also provided leadership in a variety of capacities for the Baptist State Convention, including two terms as president of the Convention and three terms as president of the Council on Christian Higher Education.

In 1985 Campbell was selected as president of Averett University in Danville, Va. During his tenure, Averett achieved university status, raised nearly \$50 million, increased its endowment from \$240,000 to nearly \$26 million, introduced a Graduate and Professional Studies Program, added athletic teams in baseball and football, and constructed a host of new campus facilities. Averett named its football stadium for Campbell in 2014.

After retiring from Averett in spring 2002, Campbell was called on to lead Gardner-Webb through an interim period while the Board of Trustees organized a plan to determine the University's next long-term president. Campbell's leadership is noted for his work with trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students and alumni to focus on the main purpose of the institution: the Christian education of its students.

In 2003, *The Star* newspaper in Shelby, N.C., recognized Campbell with its Spirit of Freedom Award for his commitment to collaboration and cooperation with the community. "The seeds of Frank's amazing healing are seen today—in the form of a strong university, led by a truly excellent president in Dr. Frank Bonner, on a thriving and growing campus," related Skip Foster, a longtime former publisher and editor of *The Star*. "His legacy is not just about what he did in the past, but the example it sets for us all moving forward."

In 2005, the Dr. and Mrs. Frank R. Campbell Christian Service Organization Endowed Scholarship Fund was created to provide support for Gardner-Webb students with financial need who dedicate themselves to studying Christian ministry.

"Dr. Campbell embodied both the vision of a great leader and the heart of a great pastor in his service as president of two outstanding historically Baptist universities," shared Dr. Tracy Jessup, GWU Vice President for Christian Life and Service and Senior Minister to the University. "It is rare to find such a combination, but God knew exactly what we needed when Dr. Campbell answered the call to serve as president of Gardner-Webb University."

Following his presidency at Gardner-Webb, Campbell returned to Virginia and continued to serve others as executive director of the Stratford House retirement community, a subsidiary of the Danville Regional Health System, from 2006-2013. He was named Citizen of the Year by the Danville Kiwanis Club in 2008.

A celebration of Campbell's life will be held at First Baptist Church in Danville, Va., on March 25 at 11 a.m. His family will receive friends an hour prior to the service and other times at home. Burial will be in Highland Burial Park in Danville.

Gardner-Webb University will hold a service of prayer and remembrance on Wednesday, March 30 at noon in the Dover Chapel on campus.

"It is difficult, and painful, to imagine what the future of Gardner-Webb University might have been without his strong and compassionate leadership," Bonner reflected. "That Gardner-Webb is what it is today will remain a large part of his great and enduring legacy, as will his place in the history of Gardner-Webb. He was truly a gentle giant."

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for

professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).